

# E&M First Impression Interview Report

Joshua Gutwill

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### November 17, 1998

**Goal:** To assess visitors' first impressions of the Electricity and Magnetism area, before it had been renovated.

#### Methods:

- Age  $\geq$  15 years
- Stand on bridge between sections 8M and 9M
- Choose the first person who crosses the bridge. If in a group, choose the person closest to the interviewer.

#### Synopsis of Results:

- The section was only somewhat appealing (average rating was 3.5 — between “Neutral” and “Appealing”).
- Men found the section slightly more appealing (mean=3.8) than women (mean=3.2).
- Over half of the visitors did not recognize that the section was about electricity.
- Visitors who recognized the theme found the section slightly more appealing (mean=3.8) than those who did not (mean=3.2).
- The most appealing aspects for visitors involved interesting looking exhibits and the lower density of visitors in the section. The least appealing aspects involved the content of the section, i.e., electricity.

#### Questions & Results:

1. Have you been in this area already today [point to EM]? Y      N

Yes 10 of 42 (24%)

No 32 of 42 (76%)

2. If you take a look around, how would describe this area [point to EM] as compared to the rest of the museum? (Do you notice any differences betw this area and other parts of the museum?)

#### **Density of people & exhibits, layout of space (26%)**

Exhibits are denser - more of them. More complex. Have to read more.

More colorful. More dense for the equipment.

More open because it's upstairs. Has more individual units.

Seems to have more densely packed stuff.

Uses space better. Can see all displays from here.

Brighter here. Not as many people.

More crowded. More interesting. Lots of hands-on.

It's up above everything. Fewer people.

Not really. It's up high and open. Can see other parts of the museum from here.

Everything's circular. Just a few things in the center.

It's round.

**Involves electricity or technology (19%)**

It's all electrical stuff.

Electronic stuff here.

More Machine oriented. Electricity. Electrical. Others are more manual.

Walked by it because it looked really metallic. Metal & electricity [how does that affect your interest?] Don't know. Didn't feel like doing electricity. Not thrilled about it. I had a bad 8th grade experience. It's interesting if someone else explains it but not when I have to explain it to myself.

More scientific. Has a lot of electric or magnifying [sic] things. Makes me think of electric or scientific things in general

Focuses on electricity - it's mechanical in nature. Looks more mechanical. Looks like lots of engines

Looks more technical, more electrical.

A little more technical.

**Involves machinery, mechanical stuff or other physics (17%)**

This is the mechanical part.

It looks fine. [Any difference...?] More mechanical things here.

Looks a little more. I don't know. Doesn't really attract me. Looks more mechanical. Looks like it's more for adults.

Not as fun as other areas. When you 1st come in, there are [mentions 3 fun exhibits from front]. This looks like too much machinery

Has to do with air or lights.

Physics stands out.

Little more complex looking.

**Looks interesting (10%)**

Love it all!

Neater looking stuff here.

Lots of intriguing things.

No different. I started at one end and I'm working to the other!

**Looks Boring (7%)**

Boring.

No moving objects except for the wind thing. Usually there's something moving.

Lots of little things. Not like one thing that's eye-catching, except for [red flag]

**Color of exhibits (7%)**

Colors - red & yellow.

More formal. Not as much color.

I've only been on the top [mezzanine]. Lots of bright colors. I like the flag thing. Noticed it right away.

**Exhibits are smaller or not as high (5%)**

More flat. Stuff over there [8M] that sticks up. Here [9M] it's more level. Hard to see the different exhibits. In [8M] you can see the different exhibits. You can't here, except for [red flag]

Less height. Things are higher back here [8M]

**Don't know (10%)**

Don't know.

Not really.

Don't know.

Only been here [8M] No [I don't notice any differences].

3. Do you get any sense of a common idea or theme among all these exhibits?

20 of 42 (48%) recognized the theme

22 of 42 (52%) did not recognize the theme

4. How appealing is this section to you?

Unappealing	Somewhat unappealing	Neutral	Somewhat appealing	Appealing
		Mean appeal of the section		
<b>All Visitors</b>		<b>3.5</b>		
Women		3.2		
Men		3.8		
ttest p value		0.14		
		Mean appeal		
Recognized Theme		3.8		
Didn't recognize theme		3.2		
ttest p value		0.14		

5. (a) Can you say what it is about this section that makes it appealing? N = 32 + 2 (Red Flag)

**The red flag exhibit (26%)**

Like things that move, like [flag] exhibit.

The red banner [red flag exhibit].

The banner exhibit is cool. The [liquid litmus] is cool.

That ribbon thing looks fun! Lots of seats to sit down. Gives impression that it takes time to get yourself involved.

Cause you see the red flag flying. It's science. If you want to learn how to do things, it's here.

You can learn a few things here.

Red flag is pretty cool. [What else?] It's in the Exploratorium.

[Red flag] Some of the different ones [exhibits].

(Note: Two other visitors mentioned the red flag exhibit when answering Question 2. They have been counted in the red flag percentage above)

**Fewer people, good lighting, separated section (21%)**

Less people here. Better lighting - well lit and arid [less dense].

Not as many people. Brighter so I can see what I'm looking at.

Not very crowded.

It's separated off from the rest. It's in it's own little circle.

Seems more organized. [what do you mean?] It's, in [8M] it's more of a hodgepodge. Here you can go from one to the other & you'll know which ones you've done. It's utilizes more space.

I guess the lights - lots of exhibits with lights [do the lights make it appealing to you?] Yeah, more attractive.

The organization. There's a flow & there's a lot there [gestures in circular motion w hand]

### **Hands-on exhibits (15%)**

More hands on.

More than just looking at objects. You have to read it, figure out what to do & then do something. It's more involved.

There's a lot of little, like to try out. That [liquid litmus] and that [bike generator]

Lot's of stations. Lots of things to play with.

I like to touch everything & press all the buttons which is the theme in the museum.

### **Looks interesting (15%)**

It's interesting. I'm curious to see what it's all about.

It's cool. Don't know.

New and interesting.

Lots of stuff you want to look at. Interesting.

Looks like fun.

### **Electricity is interesting (9%)**

Liked the generator bike. Love it all.

I'm interested in this - ways humans use energy to do stuff.

I like electricity.

### **Color (9%)**

Color & shapes.

The colors.

The TV screen [Color TV exh] attracts my eye.

### **Other (6%)**

Help it work - how you help it work

It's not so different from the other sections

(b) Is there anything about it you (don't) find appealing? N=13

### **Electricity is not interesting / looks hard (46%)**

It's about electricity. Not frightened by it, but didn't want to play with the electricity exhibits.

I'm not as cognitive. It bores the hell out of me.

Not going to understand or like it.

Looks science labish. I don't know. Actually, I've done a lot of reading already. I should've come here 1st - it looks like there's lots to figure out. [Is that why you should've come here 1st?] Yeah, looks like there's a lot to figure out.

Just not interested in it. I'm into art and sound more than electronics and gadgets.

Everything looks real small & intricate & complicated [say more about small] Something you'd go over to it & then not understand it.

**Can't see what to do (23%)**

No big stuff [exhibits]. Can't see what to do.

Kind of dark in here, just like the overall place.

I don't know what's here. I'm unfamiliar with it. Once I've been through the whole museum, then maybe I'll have a favorite section

**Not appealing / looks boring (23%)**

Not very appealing but I'm still interested in looking at it.

Don't think there's anything very eye-catching, Looks boring. I don't know - there might be lots of interesting stuff in here.

Content. Not an exciting area.

**Hard to navigate in there (8%)**

Not as exciting as downstairs - more activity in the center. Don't have to walk the perimeter [downstairs] and then [move in]

6. Do you have any special interest, knowledge or training in the areas of electricity and magnetism?

Physics course(s) 12 of 42 (29%)

No training 30 of 42 (71%)

7. Is this your first visit to the Exploratorium?      Y      N

Yes 20 of 42 (48%)

No 22 of 42 (52%)